

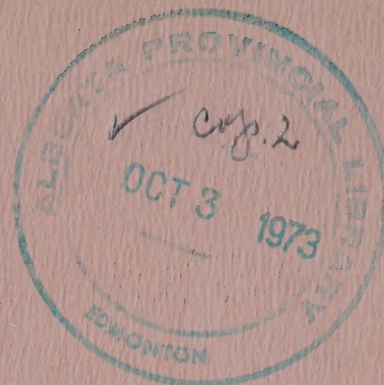
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Guide For Foster Parents.



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A GUIDE FOR FOSTER PARENTS

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CHILD WELFARE BRANCH

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1972
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

INTRODUCTION

It is our pleasure to welcome you into our family of foster parents. You have a great privilege and a great responsibility; greater even than that of our own staff, for you must be able to take the place of natural parents while the children are in your care.

A child is gifted with imagination. That gift, if nurtured, can bring results far beyond our ability to comprehend.

We, as a Department, share the responsibility with you and this booklet is written to help you work with us for the benefit of the child. In working together we shall not be found wanting.



CHILD WELFARE BRANCH

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1972
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA



FOSTER HOME CARE

THE PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

To protect and nurture a child through a period of parentlessness. Each child coming into the care of our Department should be given a sound family life experience. This can best be met by living with substitute parents (foster parents) during the time that he cannot live with his own family.

SOCIAL WORKER:

He is both your partner and the child's in offering suggestions, guidance and help with any problems; however, the responsibility for day-to-day care is yours.

He will keep you involved in planning for the child and help you with explanations to the child. The social worker represents the child's legal guardian. He works under the guidance of a trained supervisor in the regional office.

The Department of Health and Social Development has the responsibility of determining where a child will live and if a child is to be moved.

FOSTER PARENTS:

You are asked to give the child day-to-day care, affection and security. We realize that at times this will be difficult as you may be coping with a child who is having problems. If the social worker knows of problems he can help before a crisis arises. Therefore, it is important to bring the worker up to date each time he visits about everything which affects the child. It is part of the social worker's job to see the child alone and get to know him individually.

There may be times when you do not agree with

Department planning or procedure. Please feel free to discuss this with the worker. However, it remains the Department's responsibility to determine and carry out all major planning.

By becoming foster parents, it is understood that you have made the important decision to give a child a home for as long as he needs it through both good times and bad times, but should you feel you can no longer care for the child in your home, please let your worker know well in advance so that there is enough time to make suitable arrangements. We would also ask you to advise your worker should you plan to take a holiday from foster care between placements.

If you have been caring for children of the same age group for some time, e.g. babies, you may wish to try a new challenge such as providing much needed care for teenagers. If you are interested in a new area of foster home care the social worker will be pleased to discuss this with you.

In the best interests of the child, it is vital that there be trust and understanding between you and the social worker through sharing all important information. If we are to help the child we must be honest and frank with each other.

When discussing a child with you, the social worker may use some terms which you are unfamiliar with, or which have special meaning within the Child Welfare Program.



DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Foster Home:

A foster home is a residence arranged by the Child Welfare service which provides substitute family care for a planned period for a child when his own family cannot care for him.

When a child is placed in a foster home, legal rights and responsibilities to the child are not transferred to the foster parents. Adoption is a process in which the adopting parents and the child are granted full legal rights and responsibilities to each other. This process makes the child to all intents and purposes the child of the adopting parents, just as though the child had been born to them, after a six-month supervisory period.

B. Children:

As defined in the Child Welfare Act of Alberta, a "child" means a boy or girl under the age of 18 years.

1. What is a foster home?
2. What is the difference between foster home care and adoption?

1. What do you mean by "child"?

2. What is the Child Welfare Act?

This is provincial legislation which deals with the welfare and protection of all children in Alberta. The Act defines the law regarding neglected children, children, children of unmarried mothers, juvenile delinquents, parental rights and responsibilities, and adoptions.

C. Apprehension:

What do you mean when you apprehend a child?

According to the Child Welfare Act, this can mean two things:

- (a) The act of notifying the parents or persons caring for the child that the child's situation will be examined before a Judge acting under the Child Welfare Act.
- (b) Actually taking a child into custody with or without the consent of his parents or the person caring for the child. The child is then placed in a temporary home until the matter is brought before a Judge who will determine who will have future custody.

D. Wards:

What is a ward?

When a Judge commits a child to the Director of Child Welfare, the Director becomes the child's legal guardian and the child becomes a ward of the Crown. All the powers and rights of the parents are then turned over to the Director of Child Welfare for as long as the child remains a ward. There are two kinds of wardship:

- (a) Temporary Wardship—The child is under the custody of the Director of Child Welfare for a period of one year or less. During this time, the Director of Child Welfare is the legal guardian of the child and the child's parents temporarily lose all legal rights and responsibilities to the child. Temporary wardship can be renewed for a further twelve months but not exceeding a total of thirty-six months.
- (b) Permanent Wardship—The child is committed to the Director of Child Welfare until he reaches the age of 18 years, marries, or is adopted. During this time the Director becomes the legal guardian of the child and the natural parents permanently lose all legal rights and responsibilities to the child. Should the child be placed for adoption, the Director then gives up guardianship and all legal rights to the adopting parents, after a six month period.



A child becomes a ward only when the reasons for his apprehension can be proven true in court, under the Child Welfare Act. In working with the child's family, the goal is always to keep the child in his own home whenever this is reasonably possible.

WHY A CHILD COMES INTO CARE

General Reasons Why a Child Might Come Into Care:

- 1 The child of an unmarried mother who wishes to place her child for adoption.
- 2 Situations in which a child has been seriously neglected (emotionally or physically), and all reasonable efforts to work out the problems in the child's home have failed.
- 3 Situations in which children have been abandoned, or left alone for unreasonable lengths of time without adequate supervision.
- 4 The child whose parents can no longer control him; who is found to be delinquent by a Judge, and likely to remain delinquent in his own home.



When a child is apprehended by the Department of Health & Social Development, the Department must bring the case before a Judge within 20 days.

CHILD WELFARE COURT

The court is a closed hearing with only those directly involved present. It is a legal requirement that the child be identified by his parents in the court. Children are not usually present for the hearing; however occasionally the Judge requests their presence. Delinquent children who have been charged are required to appear in court.

Types of Orders Made by the Judge:

At the court, the Judge listens to the evidence of the social workers, the parents, and any other necessary witnesses. He then, on the basis of the evidence, makes his decision. The Judge may make any one of the following orders:

- 1 Dismiss the case and return the child to his parents.
- 2 Order that the case be adjourned for no longer than one year. During that time, the child would be returned to his parents with the Department of Health and Social Development supervising the home and working with the family, under a Supervision Order.
- 3 Order that the child be committed as a temporary ward of the Crown for one year or less.

Dismissal of case

Supervision order

Temporary Wardship

- 4 Permanent wardships are granted in District Court only, by a District Court Judge. A child cannot be committed as a permanent ward by a Juvenile and Family Court Judge.

CUSTODY BY AGREEMENT (NON-WARD CARE)



There are times when natural parents, through no fault of their own, cannot care for their children for a period of time.

Mental illness, or physical illness, separations of parents, or perhaps the parents have made every effort to care for a child who is disturbed, or mentally ill, and simply cannot cope with the situation any longer.

In cases such as this, where parents recognize their inability to care for the child, they agree to let the child come into the care of the Director of Child Welfare for a temporary period not exceeding six months at a time. This can be extended for a further six months if warranted, but only with the parents' consent.

Foster parents involved in caring for children under this program must be prepared to work very closely with the natural parents, who are expected to maintain very close contact with the child and the social worker.

FOSTER HOME AGREEMENT

When your home has been approved as a foster home, terms of placement of a child are set out in what is known as a Foster Home Agreement.

This is signed by the foster parents, and Administrator or Unit Supervisor for the Director of Child Welfare. When completed, it represents a contract for the care of children as provided for under the Child Welfare Act. Please familiarize yourself with the terms on this Agreement.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Please refer to our Letter for Foster Parents for complete information on:

1. Board rates and payment process
2. Clothing allowance
3. Spending money
4. Family Allowance
5. School requirements
6. Medical, hospital, dental, optometric, and other treatment services for children in care.

If you feel a child has special needs which have not been mentioned, the matter should be discussed with the child's social worker.

If your foster child shows keen interest in any recreational or cultural activities, such as Cubs, Brownies, music, sports, etc., share this with your social worker. Approval for payment must be obtained from Central Office by the child's worker. The child's Family Allowance Trust Account is used for payment of such activities. If there are not sufficient funds in the Trust Account, the Department may consider using other funds available for such services.

Discuss this with your social worker, as funds can be made available.

Foster parents vacationing within the province will not require special authorization. It is advisable that foster parents should ask for a permission letter if they are travelling in any other province in Canada or the United States from the foster child's Social Worker. Travel warranting passports should also be obtained through the foster child's Social Worker.

When a ward causes damage in a foster home or in the community, the Director of Child Welfare, as with any other parent, follows the Canadian Law (based on English Common Law) which states that a parent is not responsible for damages caused by his child unless the child has acted on specific directions from the parent. Thus, the Department, in general, is not liable for damage expenses caused by a ward. Likewise, foster parents are not liable for damages caused by their foster child in the community.

Should a ward cause damage at home, or in the community, we feel that it is part of our job and yours to teach him that he must accept responsibility for his own actions. Thus, a child should be expected to try to make amends for himself through some appropriate methods such as earning extra money to pay for the damages.

If damage is caused to your property which causes great hardship, please discuss the problem with the social worker.

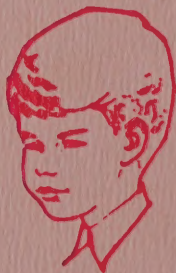
OTHER NEEDS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL NEEDS

CAMP FEES FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

VACATIONS WITH FOSTER PARENTS

DAMAGES CAUSED BY A WARD



TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

There are no hard and fast rules about travel costs and we would advise you to discuss such arrangements well in advance with the social worker.

The Department does operate within a limited budget which makes it necessary to weigh carefully such decisions and to ensure that one ward is not being more favored than another.

Mileage will only be considered if the trip is out of your locality on behalf of the foster child, e.g. hospital, dentist, etc. Mileage is not paid in cases where the driving is within your city or locality.

THE CHILD AND HIS BACKGROUND

CONFIDENTIALITY

When a child is placed in your home, information about the child's background is shared with you. In many cases, we cannot give identifying information and sometimes the department itself has very little background information. However, in general, as much information as will be helpful in working with the child is given to you.

It is important never to underestimate the confidential nature of any information given to you. This is to help you better understand the child only, and is not to be shared with relatives, friends, neighbours or other foster parents. If confidential information is shared with others, it is the child who is hurt in the process. The child, like every other human being, has a right to personal privacy and to a respect of this right from others.

THE CHILD'S OWN FAMILY



Temporary Wards and Custody By Agreement:

When a child is first placed in your home, the social worker will explain why he is not with his own parents and what contact you can expect to have with them. If the ultimate plan for the child is reunion with his family, everything possible should be done to strengthen his affection for his parents during the period of separation. The parents' visits may present some problems for you, and you may find some of their attitudes and behaviour difficult to understand. It will help if you remember that parents who, even temporarily are unable to look after their own children may feel their failure keenly when they see foster parents fulfilling their role. They will be glad to see their child well and happy but still may find it difficult to be appreciative.

If contact between the parents and the child should be maintained arrangements can be made for the parents to visit the child in your home, or they may have permission to take him out for a few hours. Unless the worker has notified you that it is permissible, the visits cannot take place out of your home, nor can the child remain with relatives overnight. At the time of placement, visiting arrangements, convenient for both you and the child's own parents, will be made. No contact between the child and the parents should be permitted or established without consultation with the supervising social worker.

It may happen that the child's own parents will talk to you about their personal problems and plans. Be a good listener, respect their confidence, but encourage them to talk things over with their worker.

It is sometimes decided that, in the child's best interests, parents should not be permitted to visit (or that visits may only be made under controlled circumstances). The social worker will explain these situations to you and, together, you can help the child understand and accept the necessity for such limitations. All arrangements for visiting should be made by your social worker.



Permanent Wards:

Some permanent wards do maintain a relationship with their parents. In such cases, the same points apply regarding contacts as with a temporary ward.

Contact between a child and his brothers and sisters, who may also be wards but in different foster homes, is usually encouraged. Often, it is impossible to keep a family of brothers and sisters together in one foster home, and it is necessary to separate them. In this type of situation, unless the contact proves to be harmful to the child's progress, the Department strives to maintain a close relationship between the children.

The major way the Department attempts to do this is through the co-operation of the foster parents in welcoming pre-arranged visits of the children to their various foster homes. Often the visit is for a few hours and, if possible, for a few days in a holiday season. The children also write back and forth to one another between visits.

We feel it is important that these children, who have in a sense "lost" their own parents, should retain the warmth and security of family ties with their brothers and sisters.



Letter Writing:

Children should be encouraged to write to their parents if they are to return to their own home. If they have been permanently removed, however, writing to or receiving letters from home can sometimes be very disturbing to them. Usually we ask parents and children to forward their letters through the social worker and, in this way, try to safeguard them from undue hurt or upset from unfulfilled promises or thoughtless remarks the parents may make. This form of censorship may be resented by a child. You can help him to understand the reason for it by interpreting our responsibility for his well-being to him, and by encouraging him to talk about his resentment to the social worker.

THE CHILD IN YOUR HOME

A CHILD'S RIGHT

As adults, we expect respect from children and we should treat children with respect in return. For example, it is thoughtless and unnecessary to talk about a child's problems in front of him as though he were not there. If you wish to discuss a problem with the social worker, this should be done in private. The child will understand that, since he sometimes talks to the worker alone, you might like to also.

A NOTE FOR FOSTER PARENTS



Children, who for various reasons, live in several foster homes often lose the details of what makes up their childhood; that is, shared family experiences, personal highlights and such basic memories as when they had measles or when they won a ribbon in a school race. For most of us, these experiences and memories are preserved by our parents in baby books, scrapbooks and in story form, and we take them for granted. But, for a child who is a ward, there is often no one to keep these memories alive for him. Thus, when he grows up, his childhood is all too often a confusing jumble of vague memories.

We are asking that you help us preserve this important part of a child's life through keeping a school and health record and a scrapbook in which you can keep pictures, report cards, personal mementos noting special experiences and, in general, provide a "history" for the child in your home.

Thus, if the child moves to a new home, he will have concrete records to help him remember personal highlights and to provide information on his health and scholastic development.

Since religious training is an important part of every child's life, provision should be made for the child's attendance at Sunday school and church. It is essential that a foster child attend the church of his own faith. The child's baptism should be discussed with the supervising social worker. Baptismal certificates and confirmation certificates should be carefully preserved by the foster parents to accompany the child wherever he might go.

CHURCH

The child should be registered in the school under his own name. The foster parents register their name as his foster family. School reports should be signed by the foster parents. The foster parents are asked to take the same interest in the child's school activities as would be expected of natural parents and to talk with the child about his interests and ambitions. It is our desire to work with foster parents to give the child, while growing up, every opportunity to develop according to his abilities.

SCHOOL

Since all children react differently to discipline, and what helps one youngster would not be good for another, the Department does not attempt to set down rules for bringing up a child. Children who come into our care may have emotional problems to a greater or lesser degree and this should be taken into account when discipline is necessary. However, a very necessary part of a child's training is in setting standards of behaviour and a child normally will expect consistency in training and discipline.

TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE

It would be hoped that you would discipline the foster child in a similar way to your own children making allowance for the possibility that the child may not respond the same as your own children as his early experiences may have been inconsistent and of a somewhat disturbing nature.

The child should be encouraged to observe the family's rules and regulations in a most natural way and the fact that the child has been placed in your home shows that the Department trusts you and feels you are qualified for this part of the child's care.

If there are serious disciplinary problems they should be brought to the attention of the social worker so that she may be able to determine whether the child will require some special treatment.



PREPARING A CHILD FOR A NEW PLACEMENT



You have known all along that the Department cannot promise that the child will stay with you always. Many things can happen. He may return to his own parents; he may go to an adoptive home; or it may be that for some reason you and he cannot make a success of living together.

When a foster child leaves a home it is hard for everyone. Sometimes foster parents must hide their own hurt feelings from the child in order to help him move without too much worry. Occasionally it happens that you are asked to co-operate with a plan which you do not fully approve. If this happens try to remember that the Department does not move children without a great deal of thought about what would be best.

When the Department knows that a change has to be made, the worker will discuss it with you as early as possible. In the same way, if you find that you cannot keep your foster child, it is understood that you will give us as much time as possible to make a good plan.

Because the Department is responsible for the child's care, plans for moving him must be made only with the Department, not with the child's parents, or other relatives, or friends.

You may feel sad and upset, but remember that, while the child has been in your home, you have given him love and good care. The happy times he has had with you will help him to make a better life.

IDENTIFICATION OF DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

Each social worker employed by the Department is issued with a photo Identification Card which he is required to carry with him at all times.

There will be times when a new social worker will be assigned to your foster child or, perhaps, another worker will be assisting your regular worker.

If a worker omits to identify himself with his card, please ask him to do so. A parent, relative, etc., could introduce himself as a social worker and their contact could be very detrimental to the child's well-being. It is most important that you know the person who is coming into your home to visit with you and the foster child.

CHANGES IN YOUR HOME

Changes in Physical Set-up of Home:

The social worker needs to know of any change in the number of people living in your household. In accepting

your home, we understand that you are agreeing not to board other children or adults from any source without discussing it with us first, and securing our approval. While responsibility toward members of your family may make such a change necessary, the social worker needs to know this and decide with you how the child will be affected.

If you are considering changing the sleeping arrangements for the children in your home, you are asked to discuss these changes with your social worker in advance.

Because you are sharing with the Department responsibility for the child, any change in your address, however temporary, is something we must know about in advance. This includes even changes in connection with any vacation you are considering.

Should finances change in any way, please notify the social worker.

In several regions, foster parents have gotten together and formed a Foster Parents Association. If your region has such an organization, you will find it helpful and enjoyable to share your problems and experiences with other foster parents. If your region does not have an active group, you may be interested in beginning one.

1. To improve the lot of foster children within the area and to provide them with status and acceptance in the home and the community.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the handling of problems as foster parents.
3. To create an awareness of the role of the Department and its relationship to foster homes.
4. To provide for easier access by Department workers to a major group of foster parents.
5. To provide means whereby the foster parents can better place recommendations before the Department.



CHANGE OF ADDRESS

CHANGES IN FINANCES

FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

GOALS OF THE FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

6. To develop better understanding by the community of the needs of foster children, the need for more homes, and the need of the community to accept and work with the Foster Parent Association to the end that foster children will be accepted by all.

THE EMERGENCY WORKER

Every region has a social worker on duty at night and during the weekends. This is a duty which the social workers share in turns. The purpose of the emergency worker is to help with any immediate pressing problem and to handle any new situation that might come up which requires immediate attention. Ask your worker for the Emergency telephone number.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT FOR FOSTER PARENTS

The social worker assigned to your foster child should be your immediate contact with the Department. All areas of concern should be discussed with your worker. This type of communication brings about a sound healthy working relationship between you, your worker, and the Department.

There may be times when you feel that your concerns should be discussed with someone other than your social worker. In situations such as this, your contact should be with the worker's regional office unit supervisor and/or regional office administrator.

If further contacts are necessary, they should be considered in the following order:

1. Program Supervisor at Central Office
2. Director or Assistant Director of Child Welfare at Central Office
3. Deputy Minister of Social Development Services
4. Minister of Health and Social Development

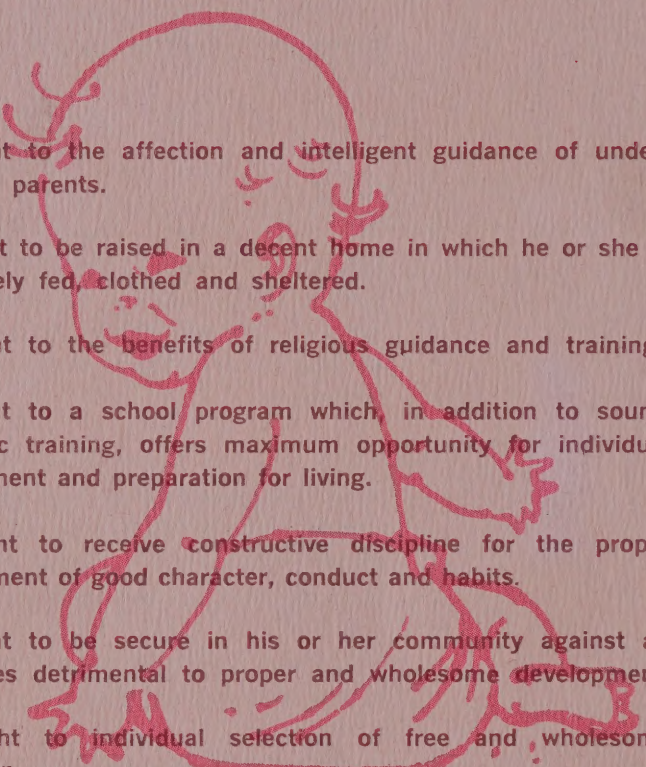
If contacts are made in the aforementioned order, everyone concerned will be aware and understanding of the situation.

We must remember that you and your social worker are "partners" working together in the best interests of the foster child and his family. Therefore, if at all possible, the majority of concerns should be resolved between you and the worker.



CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

For each child, regardless of race, colour, or creed!

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- 1 The right to the affection and intelligent guidance of understanding parents.
 - 2 The right to be raised in a decent home in which he or she is adequately fed, clothed and sheltered.
 - 3 The right to the benefits of religious guidance and training.
 - 4 The right to a school program which, in addition to sound academic training, offers maximum opportunity for individual development and preparation for living.
 - 5 The right to receive constructive discipline for the proper development of good character, conduct and habits.
 - 6 The right to be secure in his or her community against all influences detrimental to proper and wholesome development.
 - 7 The right to individual selection of free and wholesome recreation.
 - 8 The right to live in a community in which adults practice the belief that the welfare of their children is of primary importance.
 - 9 The right to receive good adult example.
 - 10 The right to a job equal with his or her ability, training and experience, and protection against physical or moral employment hazards which adversely affect wholesome development.
 - 11 The right to early diagnosis and treatment of physical handicaps and mental and social maladjustments at public expense whenever necessary.

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